

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

Congress Leaves Town without Addressing Gas Prices

As Americans paused last week to celebrate July 4th, the spiraling cost of energy put a dark cloud over many a celebration.

From more expensive watermelons and ribs to the scaled-back family vacation, many in southwest Alabama and across the country curtailed their festivities due to the higher prices.

Incredibly, with energy prices climbing higher almost every single day, the House majority chose to adjourn for the Independence Day recess without voting on reforms to increase the production of American energy to lower gas prices.

Republicans made repeated attempts both in committees and on the House floor to force an up or down vote on making our country less dependent on foreign oil, but these attempts have

been repeatedly blocked.

In the House Appropriations Committee, on which I serve, a mark-up was adjourned in lieu of allowing a vote on amendments to increase the supply of American-made energy.

It marked the fourth congressional committee hearing or mark-up that Democrats shut down last month, rather than allowing Republicans to offer meaningful energy solutions.

It appears that the agenda the majority is promoting – focusing on environmental issues – is more important than trying to foster energy independence in order to bring some relief at the fuel pump.

With gas prices in our area currently hovering around \$3.94 per gallon, I find it unconscionable for Congress to go home without addressing what most Americans consider their top priority.

These spiraling energy prices are affecting everyone – from businesses to the American family,

the price of energy is having a dramatic impact on our national economy as well as the national psyche.

An Associated Press – Yahoo poll found that 90 percent of Americans expect that high gas prices will directly and negatively impact their lives.

According to the report, "Like a plague that does not discriminate by economic class, race or age, soaring fuel prices are inflicting pain throughout the U.S. Nine in 10 are expecting the ballooning costs to squeeze them financially over the next half-year.

"Nearly half think that hardship will be serious. To cope, most are driving less, easing off the air conditioning and heating at home and cutting corners elsewhere.

Half are curtailing vacation plans; nearly as many are considering buying cars that burn less gas."

I am hopeful when Congress returns to Washington on July 8 that Democratic leaders will finally choose to work to help bring down the price of energy.

Second Amendment Victory

In a victory for the Second Amendment, the Supreme Court late last month upheld a federal appeals court ruling that a gun ban in Washington, D.C. is unconstitutional.

In the 5 to 4 decision, the Court ruled all Americans should have the ability to defend themselves, a right guaranteed by the Second Amendment.

The amendment states: "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

The Supreme Court Justices considered whether the District of Columbia ban on possession of handguns in the home violates this amendment.

The controversy resulted from a law passed by the D.C. Council in 1976. The law prohibited the possession and registration of handguns.

Several unsuccessful attempts have been made over the past 32 years to reverse the ban.

In March 2007, the U.S. Court of Appeals stated the ban on firearms is unconstitutional, and the Supreme Court upheld this decision.

The Court decided the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to own firearms, and the D.C. ban violated this right.

Justice Antonin Scalia delivered the opinion of the Court. He stated the Constitution does not permit "the absolute prohibition of handguns held and used for self-defense in the home."

I am convinced that responsible gun ownership, not more restrictive gun control legislation, must be the primary focus of our law enforcement and judicial systems in addressing gun related crime.

I have always been a strong proponent of the Second Amendment rights of law abiding citizens

and have worked hard during my tenure in Congress to support and promote these rights.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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For release the week of Monday, July 07, 2008. For more information please contact Mike Lewis at (202)225-4931.